

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T DOHA 0982

EXDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR NEA/ARP

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MASS, QA, US, TC

SUBJ: U.S. ARMS POLICY IN LOWER GULF

REF: DOHA 0968, ABU DHABI 2496 (NOTAL)

1. I APPRECIATE ABU DHABI'S APPREHENSIONS THAT WE MAY JIGGLE THEIR TOW WIRE. THANKS TO OUR CAMEL EXPRESS COURIER SERVICE, I WAS NOT RPT NOT AWARE THAT TOW SALE TO UAE STILL A POSSIBILITY BEFORE DOHA REFTTEL WAS SENT. INCIDENTALLY, THIS SPEAKS TO KEEPING AREA POSTS BETTER INFORMED BY CABLE ON SUCH REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, A PLEA WHICH I MADE DURING MY RECENT CONSULTATIONS IN THE DEPT.

2. IN ANY EVENT, POSSIBILITY OF TOW SALE TO UAE "FOR LARGELY

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POLITICAL REASONS" HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR LOWER GULF ARMS

POLICY AND RAISES QUESTION ABOUT POLICY'S STEADFASTNESS AND CONSISTENCY. IN THIS RVNTEXT, I AM AWARE OF THE ENDLESS ARGUMENTS THAT HAVE GONE ON OVER THE YEARS OVER DEFINING WHAT ARE "SOPHISTICATED" OR "OFFENSIVE" WEAPONS, AND THE "POLITICAL" REASONS OFTEN PUT FORWARD TO FINESSE OR BLUR THESE DEFINITIONS AND JUSTIFY EXCEPTIONS TO DECLARED POLICY.

3. I SUSPECT THAT THESE "POLITICAL" REASONS OFTEN BOIL DOWN TO THE PROBLEM THAT THE HOST GOVT WILL BE SORE AT US FOR SAYING "NO" TO AN OTHERWISE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY ARMS REQUEST, WITH WHATEVER IMPACT THIS MAY HAVE ON BILATERAL RELATIONS. THIS IS CERTAINLY TRUE IN CASE OF QATARI REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON F-5S. IN ADDITION, I ADMIT THE RELATIVE THINNESS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH QATAR (AND PERHAPS OTHER NEIGHBORING STATES) MAKES A POSSIBLE ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP, WHETHER JUSTIFIED OR NOT IN TERMS OF POLICY, AN ATTRACTIVE DEVICE TO BEEF UP THE RELATIONSHIP IN THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF OTHER POSSIBILITIES.

4. A NUMBER OF ADDRESSEES HAVE SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD REVIEW OF LOWER GULF ARMS POLICY AND BE PREPARED TO REQUITE SOME OF THE DEMANDS OF THESE COUNTRIES FOR ARMS FOR THE SAKE OF ENHANCING BILATERAL RELATIONS. I AGREED, AND STILL DO, WITH DEPT'S JUDGMENT THAT WE SHOULD HOLD THE LINE ON F-5S FOR QATAR, PREDICATED OMOBELIEF THAT WE SOULD BE HOLDING LINE ELSEWHERE ON SOPHISTICATED HARDWARE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHAT I UNDERSTAND IS OUR LOWER GULF ARMS POLICY. QUESTION NOW ARISES AS TO HOW REGIONAL THIS POLICY IS, AND WHETHER WE HAVE ONE POLICY FOR QATAR, ANOTHER FOR THE UAE AND YET ANOTHER FOR BAHRAIN AND OMAN.

5. BEFORE I UNDERTAKE AN EXPLANATION OF OUR LOWER GULF ARMS POLICY TO THE AMIR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, I NEED CLARIFICATIONS INDICATED ABOVE. I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT IF WE ARE TO EXPLAIN OUR REFUSAL TO PROVIDE F-5 INFORMATION TO GOQ ON BASIS OF AN ARMS POLICY, I SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO ILLUSTRATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY ELSEWHERE, ALTHOUGH WE SEEM TO BE RUNNING OUT OF ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES. ABU DHABI'S TREPIDATIONS ABOUT OUR BOXING OURSELVES IN AND POSSIBLY DECEIVING LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE VERY REAL ONES UNLESS WE ARE CONSISTENT IN APPLYING WHAT WE TOUT AS A REGIONAL POLICY. PERHAPS THE POLICY SHOULD BE DISCARDED AND WE SHOULD DEAL ON A STRICTLY BILATERAL BASIS.

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FOR EXAMPLE, SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE TO THE USG OF POSSIBLY EXPANDED MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS WITH BAHRAIN AND OMAN FAR OUTSHADOW ANY DEALS WE MIGHT MAKE WITH UAE AND QATAR; HENCE IT MAY BE A MISTAKE TO BOX THESE FOUR COUNTRIES UP TOGETHER.

6. AS NOTED ABOVE, I WILL WAIT DEPT'S COMMENTS ON QUESTIONS RAISED ABOVE BEFORE INFORMING AMIR AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF OUR REFUSAL TO SUPPLY INFORMATION ON F-5S TO GOQ.

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